

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION AF-10

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AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
USINT HAVANA

S E C R E T KHARTOUM 4199

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: MASS, PEPR, SU, ET, US, UR
SUBJ: NIMEIRI AIDE COMMENTS ON MENGISTU AND RELATIONS WITH
ETHIOPIA

1. NIMEIRI MAY BE IN MIDST MAJOR POLICY SHIFT TOWARD MENGISTU REGIME. IN CONVERSATION SEPTEMBER 9 ON OTHER MATTERS (SEPTELS) MINPRESIDENCY AFFAIRS DR. BAHA EL-DIN IDRIS SAID USG SHOULD COOPERATE WITH SUDANGOV TO HELP MENGISTU COMBAT HIS DOMESTIC ENEMIES. HE EVEN SAID USG SHOULD CONSIDER PROVIDING DEFENSIVE ARMS TO MENGISTU.
2. DR. BAHA'S PRINCIPAL POINT WAS THAT ETHIOPIAN COMMUNISTS WITH SOVIET BACKING WERE OUT TO TOPPLE MENGISTU WHO, HE SAID, IS NOT RPT NOT A COMMUNIST. SUDANGOV PERCEIVES
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SOVIETS AS PRINCIPAL THREAT AND IT WOULD BE VERY BAD FOR SUDAN IF RELATIVELY INDEPENDENT MENGISTU WERE REPLACED BY TRUE SOVIET PUPPET. THEREFORE, PRESENT SUDANGOV POLICY IS TO TRY TO WEAN MENGISTU AWAY FROM SOVIETS. DR. BAHA SAID USG SHOULD SUPPORT THIS POLICY.

3. DISCUSSION OF SUDAN-ETHIOPIA RELATIONS CAME ABOUT

WHEN I ASKED ABOUT NIMEIRI-MENGISTU MEETING. DR. BAH
SAID SUDANESE HAD HOPED MEETING COULD BE HELD PRIOR TO
NIMEIRI'S VISIT TO U.S. AND EUROPE, BUT MENGISTU
ASKED FOR POSTPONEMENT. SUDANESE NOW RPT NOW HOPE MEETING
CAN TAKE PLACE IN LATTER HALF OF OCTOBER AFTER NIMEIRI
RETURNS.

4. I ASSURED DR. BAH THAT I WOULD REPORT HIS VIEWS TO
WASHINGTON AND SAID THAT USG ALSO WANTED MAINTAIN FRIENDLY
RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA. I DID NOTE THAT ARMS FOR MENGISTU
REGIME PROBABLY WOULD ENCOUNTER OPPOSITION IN U.S. CONGRESS.
I ALSO OBSERVED THAT IT HARD TO IMAGINE MENGISTU FEELING
FRIENDLY TOWARD SUDAN CONSIDERING SUDANESE SUPPORT FOR
ERITREANS. HOWEVER, DR. BAH DISMISSED THIS SAYING ERITREAN
PROBLEM COULD BE RESOLVED IF SOVIETS WERE MADE TO LEAVE
ETHIOPIA.

5. COMMENT: DR. BAH'S REMARKS ARE SO DIFFERENT FROM ANY-
THING WE HAVE HEARD UNTIL NOW THAT I HESITATE TO COMMENT
ON HOW CLOSELY THEY REFLECT NIMEIRI'S OWN VIEWS. IF PROPOSED
MEETING WITH NIMEIRI SEPTEMBER 16 TAKES PLACE I SHALL ASK
HIM FOR HIS VIEWS REGARDING MENGISTU. IN ANY CASE, IT
SEEMS LIKELY THAT NIMEIRI WILL WISH DISCUSS SOVIET ROLE
IN ETHIOPIA WITH PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY WHEN HE
VISITS WASHINGTON. MOREOVER, I DO BELIEVE DR. BAH
REFLECTS NIMEIRI'S THINKING IN CHARACTERIZING SOVIETS
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AS PRINCIPAL THREAT TO SUDANESE INTERESTS IN REGION.
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